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March 10, 2016

NEWS RELEASE

Department of Public Health Warns Residents of Possible Contaminated Cheese

Case of brucellosis believed to be caused by illegal vendor, unpasteurized goat cheese

EL PASO, Texas - The City of El Paso Department of Public Health is warning residents of the dangers of consuming unpasteurized cheese. This, after a local man was hospitalized after eating goat cheese purchased from an unlicensed food vendor. After complaining of fever, joint pain, and fatigue, the man who is in his mid-sixties, tested positive for Brucellosis.

Brucellosis is an infectious disease caused by bacteria. The most common way a person can become infected is by eating or drinking unpasteurized or raw dairy products. When sheep, goats, or cows are infected, their milk becomes contaminated with the bacteria. If the milk from the infected animal is not pasteurized the infection will be transmitted to a person who consumes the milk and/or cheese product. There was only one case of this disease reported last year.

"We want our residents to keep in mind that purchasing food from an illegal vendor can be very dangerous. One should assume all cheese sold on the street is unpasteurized," said Robert Resendes, Public Health Director.

Initial symptoms of the disease include: fever, sweats, malaise, anorexia, headache, pain (in muscles, joints, and/or back), and fatigue. Some signs and symptoms may persist for longer periods of time. Others may never go away or reoccur. These can include: recurrent fevers, arthritis, swelling of the testicle and scrotum area, swelling of the heart (endocarditis), neurologic symptoms (in up to 5% of all cases), chronic fatigue, depression, and swelling of the liver and/or spleen. Depending on the timing of treatment and severity of illness, recovery may take a few weeks to several months. Death from brucellosis is rare, occurring in no more than 2% of all cases.

Anyone who experiences these symptoms and has consumed unpasteurized cheese products should contact their primary care physician immediately. To report illegal food vendors, please call 3-1-1.

The efforts and services offered by the Department of Public Health support the City of El Paso's strategic goal to nurture and promote a healthy, sustainable community. For more information on the programs and services offered by the Department of Public Health, please visit www.EPHealth.com or dial 2-1-1.

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